

### *Contingency Funds Released In Wake Of Panel's OK Of Leahy Amendment Backed By Sanders And Welch*

WASHINGTON (Wednesday, Sept. 17) - With winter just around the corner, Vermont Wednesday received a timely infusion of \$2,486,774 more in home heating relief. The announcement comes three months after a key congressional panel approved an amendment sponsored by Sen. Patrick Leahy (D-Vt.) and backed by Sen. Bernie Sanders (I-Vt.) and Rep. Peter Welch (D-Vt.) pressing the Bush Administration to release these leftover funds from the Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP).

President Bush Wednesday directed Health and Human Services Secretary Michael O. Leavitt to release the entire remaining LIHEAP contingency fund -- \$100 million appropriated for FY08, and \$20 million left over from a previous appropriation, as called for in the amendment backed by the Vermont Congressional Delegation and okayed by the Senate Appropriations Committee on June 26. Leahy, a senior member of the committee, added the amendment to the annual budget bill for the Department of Health and Human Services and other federal agencies.

The Vermont Delegation is also leading on other fronts to boost LIHEAP funding for the winter ahead, including a bill sponsored by Sanders that is pending before the Senate.

"Soaring home heating costs already are a clear and present threat facing thousands of Vermont households," said Leahy. "These funds were doing no good sitting in an agency's vault. Congress appropriated these funds for times like these."

Sanders said, "I am delighted that this \$2.5 million has been released by the president, but clearly more needs to be done. Unless we at least double funding for home heating assistance, and provide another \$20 million for Vermont, people will go cold this winter. Seniors will die. Children will get sick."

"This is a critical step, but we need to double heating assistance funding to avert what could be an extremely dangerous winter for low income Vermonters," said Welch. "At a time of unprecedented bail-outs on Wall Street, President Bush should drop his reckless veto threats

and recognize more heating aid is required to help those most in need."